

campaign. Early in the campaign season, black leader James Young cautioned that if the Democrats returned to power, blacks would be disfranchised.⁴⁶ As a response to the rhetoric of the Democratic campaign, Republican congressman George H. White and Populist representatives met with President McKinley at intervals to warn the president about the “unholy war that Democrats are making on the color line” and to ask for assistance. Democratic partisans picked up on the visits and made headlines out of the visits to Washington. One rumor circulated that North Carolina senator Jeter Pritchard had visited with President McKinley and had requested federal troops for the state to ensure a fair election. Pritchard replied that he had not requested troops but, instead, had alerted the President to the situation in the state and had stressed to the president that Governor Russell should exhaust his resources before federal troops were called in. Another news item circulated that Pritchard had written to Attorney General John Griggs asking for assistance in the form of troops—evoking the specter of Reconstruction. It was reported that the president’s cabinet discussed the idea and decided that no troops would be sent unless Governor Russell requested them or mail was disrupted. The editor of the *Wilmington Morning Star* added that “Federal troops cannot legally be ordered to any State to preserve the peace until both civil and military powers of the State have been exhausted.” President McKinley reportedly handed the matter over to his attorney general for consideration. In an interview, Griggs was quoted as saying that “if

necessary to preserve order troops will overrun the State.”⁴⁷

In addition to their political troubles, the state’s leading Republicans and Populists faced threats to their personal safety. Populist senator Marion Butler endured being pelted with rotten eggs while giving speeches, and both Governor Russell and Butler were threatened with personal violence. More than most politicians, Governor Russell was the target of Red Shirt hatred. As a result of his treatment, Russell resorted to using armed bodyguards to protect him even in the Governor’s Mansion. A culminating event occurred while returning to Raleigh after a trip to Wilmington on election day to cast his ballot. Upon his return to Raleigh, Russell’s train was stopped and boarded by Red Shirts in Hamlet and Maxton. Russell’s life was saved only because railroad officials were warned of the impending threat and helped move the governor to the rear of the train into a baggage car.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Morning Star* (Wilmington), October 25, 1898; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 637; Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 124, 127; Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 302; *Wilmington Messenger*, October 26, 1898.

⁴⁸ At the stop in Maxton, Russell and the railroad employees were warned by Red Shirt leader and future governor Cameron Morrison that his life in danger. Morrison and some of his men remained on the train and when the train was searched in Hamlet, Russell was hidden for his safety. According to the newspapers, Russell was met by approximately 100 Red Shirts in Maxton. The *Wilmington Messenger* reported that the Red Shirts “appeared to be in for a good time” and that Russell “took their visit good naturedly.” This article appears to refer to Morrison’s activity. Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 101-2; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 10, 1898; Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 290, 303-4; Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 134; Douglas C. Abrams, “A Progressive-Conservative Deal: The 1920 Democratic Gubernatorial Primaries in North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, 55 (October 1978): 426.

⁴⁶ Young became a target of Daniels and the Democratic Party. Daniels later admitted that he was harsh on Young during the campaign. Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 124.